COMIX WAVE
I SAY, CLAUS, ISN'T IT XMAS EVE?
BY JOVE! RIGHT YOU ARE AUNT HUNTZHALL! JITTERS, READY THE SLEIGH AND MY BEST RED TUX!
VEDDY GOOD, SUH!
I SAY I SAY I SAY.
TUT! TUT!
CLICK
D.Miller '90

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DISNEYLAND AT 35

Periodically I have to make my pilgrimage down to Anaheim to visit Disneyland and I always seem to write the same story. This time I got into the lot early and was in the holding pen [Main Street] for the opening ceremony. Several thousand of us waited while the voices of the various Disney characters said really nerdy things then at the stroke of nine the ropes were dropped and the park came to life. People ran in all directions to be first in line for the various rides and I headed for the River Queen to have breakfast with a flock of junk food sparrows. They come inside now and sit right on your plate waiting. After many generations they are as addicted to white flour and sugar and crapola as the rest of us.

It's $27.50 for an adult to get into Disneyland. You get unlimited rides and exhibits, but I am always bugged, because I never go on any of the rides and basically I have to pay the money just to go in and walk around. I checked out everything new while I was there, stopping to look up at Splash Mountain. The opening is vaginal and it looks like just the ride for people who are interested in resuffering their birth trauma. The cars speed along a track and at the peak of the ride they shoot out of the womb and down into the water, the newly reborn screaming all the way. From where I was standing, I could hear the loop of *Oh,. Suzanna* going on forever as the Mark Twain riverboat slid around Tom Sawyer's island on it's 35-year-old track. Canoes loaded with tourists rowed by.

There are some ideas too horrible to mention like Brer Bar, a fast food joint near the Country Bear Playhouse. Everything leads into everything else in Disneyland, usually a store stuffed with furry replicas of Mickey Mouse or Pooh Bear or Brer whatnot. Just a spoonful of hype helps the products go down, the products go down. Call this supercapitalisticexpiatidocious. I look at all this sculptured antiquarianism and think of the millions of dollars of suphisticated electronic equipment in the tunnels beneath it all, the hi-tech world of the present that supports the low-tech world of the past. Here are artificial streams run by hydraulic pumps. It's total artifice, often quite beautiful. There were people with camcorders aimed at other people with camcorders everywhere and I realized I was in a thousand home movies. Hi mom! There is a complete ranch with a petting farm and I expect all of the local animals are now accustomed to the roar of the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. The train passes every few minutes. Santa is over there with a little girl on his lap, his hand on her knee. Click! Goofy is wearing Santa drag and a Japanese tourist tries to get his wife to pose with Goofy, but she shakes her head no and waves her hands. She looks fearful of Goofy and he is kind of a monster with those teeth. Kids ride up and down on replicas of Dumbo as the camcorders capture their childhood for future embarassment. In Tomorrowland, it's white boys on Motown, very loud. A little blonde girl rides by in her stroller with fingers in ears, squinting. I eat an overpriced Space burger and watch people posing with Mickey Mouse as a white boy sings about Papa having a brand new bag. Kids lean out of skybuckets in the sky above the Sleeping Beauty's castle and the monorail zips off toward the Disneyland Hotel for another load of money. Racing cars zip around their tracks as people climb into small scale submarines for a ride around the pool filled with plastic and plaster of paris crabs and octopi.

Looks like an old familiar bag to me. One of the problems with Disneyland is the narrowness of the park's theme. One gets very tired of seeing that stupid mouse on everything. At least over at Knott's Berry Farm, there is variety. You can go to Snoopy's camp and see Charlie Brown and lots of Schulz's characters walking around with girl and boy scouts and in the shops you see as many Ninja Turtles as you see Snoopys. It's $21 for the day at Knott's and I think it's more family and little kid oriented. The rides are certainly more terrifying. Anyone who has every been on Montezooma's Revenge will never forget it. I look at the antique vehicles and realize that the working vehicles of the past have become the objets d'art of the present. A stagecoach built in 1859 with iron-encased wooden wheels. This is real craft, a vehicle made by a man's hands that has lasted over a century. What car of today has so lasted?

Stunt guys demonstrate how the bad guys and good guys fight it out on film, how they take the falls. Total macho. All the girl in gingham does is titter and scream as the men handle all the rough stuff. A woman was nothing but a prop in the old westerns.

I hear the sound of a Sunday morning prayer coming out of Chapel of Reflections juxtaposed with the screams of the people in one of the cars Montezooming downward. Near me passes the paddlewheeler, the Walter K, named for Walter Knott whose berry stand once stood out here at the edge of his farm in what is now Buena Park.

Knott's is comfortable. There are more trees, more places to sit and rest, and the food is cheapper and more varied than it is in Disneyland. It's still junk, but it hurts less when you don't to pay gourmet prices for it. Disneyland tends to be all fantasy even when it makes a gesture in the direction of history. There is more of the real history of this area at Knott's. The Spanish background of the area is available and there are Mexican restaurants and beautiful examples of Aztec art and sculpture. The only thing really yupped up was the Christmas Faire hustle which is pretty much the same as the Harvest or Dickens Faires though with the emphasis on shopping and not upon entertainment. I hate these rip-offs where you have to pay to get into a place where you are going to buy things. Only in America will people pay for the dubious privilege of being sold a lot of bourgeois crafts and general crapola. I get hustled enough in places where I don't have to pay to get in.

Still I enjoyed Knott's. I liked the country music in the background and the lazier atmosphere of the place. There is a complete replica of Independence Hall in the parking lot there. There's a ghost town with all of the original crafts represented and there is Mott's Miniature Museum, one of the most incradible collections of miniatures in the world, some of them so tiny they require magnification just to see their form. You could spend a day in this little museum and still not see all of the little replicas.

While Knott's is a great repository of the past of California, a place where you can ride around on a real stagecoach, Disneyland has assimilated

the present and the future. There you can see Michael Jackson in 3-D and take a Star Wars tour.

Getting to either of these places is not going to be fun. Driving in Southern California is total madness. People ignore the speed limits and have no patience with those who do not already know the way. I tried to keep my rental car under 60 and people went by and around and almost through me as though I were sitting still. The signs are useless unless you already know where you are going. Disneyland is on Harbor and Katella in Anaheim, but the first sign you see that says Disneyland is in Anaheim and if you get on Harbor going the wrong way you can wind up in South Africa. Knott's is on Highway 39 or Beach Blvd and you get there after about eight miles of junk food restaurants that look the same here as they do in Nebraska or Illinois. There are no landmarks to guide you in the valley and when I looked on either side of me all I saw was a ring of dark smog. In the Bay Area, we use the mountains, the buildings, bridges, etc., to guide us around. Driving in the valley is chaos and if you stop to ask directions you find that the people do not know where they are. I got wrong directions everytime and only got where I wanted to go by sheer luck. There are more motels around that area than anywhere else on earth. It's true. The entire town of Anaheim was nothing but a truck stop between orange groves when I was first through there in 1943; today, it is a city made up of motels and chain restaurants.

All because an animator named Walt Disney wanted to recapture his childhood by rebuilding a scale model of it in Orange County in 1955. Well, he was laughed at at the time and the project was called Disney's Folly. Today, Disney is one of the only two entertainment conglomerates remaining in American control. -C.G.

Advocates of puritanism in the United States should take lessons in morality from the Russians. In Russia it was forbidden to sleep in the same hotel room if you were not married, unless you were a foreign tourist. Thus, a problem unmarried people of all ages faced was, Where could they make love? In cars? Few Russians had them. At home? The housing shortage made that impossible. The solution was the trains. Public transportation is very cheap in the USSR. The sound trip between Moscow and Leningrad was paradise for illegitimate lovers and people who just liked sex. Jane [Fonda] and I didn't realize this when we took the sleeper to the former capital of the czars. Our compartment resembled a miniroom in a three-star hotel: lackered wood, a copper lamp on a mahogany table, velvet curtains, a doll's house bathroom with a shower and toilet. We spent a very passionate and intimate evening. Late at night, when I couldn't get to sleep, I decided to take a walk in the corridors. I came upon a sleeping car. The first compartment comprised six berths and on each one there was a couple. Twelve people were making love. The rest of the carriage was not quite as active, but I had the impression that people were not bored.

Roger Vadim, 1986.

SOAPOPOLA

Misogynist of the month: David Lynch. I hated ERASERHEAD more than anything I ever watched and I hated BLUE VELVET almost as much and I have avoided TWIN PEAKS since watching the tedious pilot which I hated almost as much as BLUE VELVET. I don't like sadism. I don't hate women and I don't like to see them punched around, tortured, and generally abused, and I don't think the fifties were funny at all. Or campy. Or even very interesting with a few minor exceptions. I hate the droning lugubrious music that backs up the surreality of TWIN PEAKS almost as much as I hated the themes of most of the radio soap operas I had to listen to in my mother's kitchen when I was growing up. TWIN PEAKS is like something Igor would daydream about on the way back to Vic Frankenstein's lab with a stolen brain. T-shirts are selling on Telegraph Avenue that read I KILLED LAURA PALMER! Moe is selling THE DIARY OF LAURA PALMER in his basement. College students have poster pictures of Laura's rotting corpse on the walls of their dorm rooms and local Stop signs are being modified to read Stop Bob and they don't mean Joe Bob Briggs or the pipe-smoking Bob of Subgenius fame. That TWIN PEAKS is running third in the ratings this month is ample testimony to the decaying state of a significant share of the public psyche. What is so irritating is that my attempt to avoid this dung heap is being subverted at every turn because I know people who are Lynch addicts and they tell me all about TP. Soaps are the slime of our time. Would you believe that people go and sit in the Bear's Lair, the beer joint at UC, and watch stuff like THE GUIDING LIGHT and THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS? With T. S. Eliot, Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky and Tom Pyncheon lying closed on the table before them, these young people sit there lusting after soap op stars every afternoon. Where ARE the brain police?

If you understood any or all of the above rap, you need help. Check in at your local mental health clinic post haste.

C.G.

Hank Ketchum is making the rounds promoting his autobiography, THE MERCHANT OF DENNIS. Ketchum is 70 now and still believes Dennis is everyboy. Well, he's not, but the character certainly influenced a lot of cartoonists. Watterson's Calvin has been doing Dennis' schtick for a long time now with his dad standing in for Mr. Wilson. The son Dennis was based on is now 44, divorced, and living in Ohio. If you give any serious thought to the comic strips extant these days you have to realize that most of them were created a hell of a long time ago and reflect the era of their creation, not the contemporary world. This is neither good nor bad per se, daily strips being the running gags most of them are, but it does say a lot about the cartoon editors of the major papers and the readership they have in mind. If you go for continuity, you're going to be conservative as were men like Harold Gray, Milton Caniff, and Charles Schulz just to name a few. The contemporary ma y appear briefly, but always as a negative. Ernie Bushmiller made fun of the external appearance of beatniks and hippies and would be poking the same fun at newavers and spikers and baldies today if he were alive to do NANCY. Caniff attacked protestors in STEVE CANYON in the same superficial manner, consigning them to Maumee [mommy], and Al Capp bugged the hip community no end when he make fun of Joan Baez as Joanie Phoney. Point is the fads and fallacies of the present are never permanent and the strip cartoonist who wants to be around for a long time has to bear this in mind. At the same time the older strips have a way of enforcing stagnation and reenforcing what many of us consider negative ideas. Don't tell me it isn't racist as hell for Orphan Annie to have an Indian body servant named Punjab who calls her Missy in 1990. It is. Not only are some of the older strips that survive in the dailies and Sundays racist and sexist to the core, but the younger artists and writers who have taken them over seem to be totally unaware of what they are perpetuating. I agree with Watterson that no character should go on indefinitely and none should ever be taken over by assistants. When Chic Young died, Blondie should have been laid to rest with him. After all, who needs Blondie now that we have The Wonder Years? [chuckle]

Ah, illusion and reality in our time. Don't you love it? I don't see why we are sending half a million young American mercenaries to fight a desert war in defense of a country where a woman can't even buy a soft drink in a store. Why don't we just send Sly Stallone, Arnie Schwartzenegger, Mel Gibson, and Bruce Willis? Couldn't these guys just wrap it all up in a day or two? Be just, too. Millionaires fighting to protect millionaires. Funny how the real wars are always fought by young teenagers whose dads are electricians and plumbers and sheel metal workers and Superman and Little Orphan Annie are never around when there's a mine field to cross. Television has become telediversion and most of us watch a film and leave with the delusion that something significant has happened. The comic strip doesn't even have that effect. Nanoseconds of cathartic chuckles over breakfast about a world of symbolic beings that have no natural bodily functions.